



John Watts De Peyster.



BURGOYNE'S CAMPAIGN.

JUNE—OCTOBER, 1777.

JUSTICE TO SCHUYLER. (1)

The following article possesses interest at this moment, (1868) when BANCROFT, in the ninth volume of his "History of the United States," has laid himself open to such deservedly severe attacks by his depreciation of the personal character and military qualifications of Major General PHILIP SCHUYLER to whose Practical-Strategy the defeat of BURGOYNE was due. In lowering SCHUYLER, the historian not only threw a doubt upon the reliability of all his portraiture and the impartiality of his judgment, but did great injustice to the State of New York, to whose yeomanry soldiers bred on the "Bloody Ground"—in the "Flanders of America"—the overthrow of BURGOYNE must be chiefly attributed. Second to none—not even to WASHINGTON—in the purity of his patriotism; second only to WASHINGTON and to GREENE in his accomplished generalship—one of the deepest investigators and clearest writers on our Revolutionary struggles has even claimed for SCHUYLER that he was the superior of the latter.

(1) GEORGE H. MOORE, Esq., Librarian of the New York Historical Society, a gentleman better read in American History than almost any other in the country, remarked (26th January, 1868) to Major WILLARD BULLARD, U. S. V., that he was not satisfied that "ANCHOR" had not written (referring to the preceding article) the best Defence of Schuyler which had yet appeared.

[New York, 1868].

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To misrepresent SCHUYLER is to dishonor the Empire State, which in this "time that tried men's souls," did more than its portion of the duty, and bore more than its share of the burdens. No state suffered more than New York, for New York was more divided against itself than any other colony. It was not only the arena of civil war, but of the bitterest fratricidal strife, and the horrors of Indian warfare were superadded to those of a nominally civilized invasion which furnished, whetted, incited and subsidized the scalping knife; this, too, not only for seven years, (1775-81) but for over a hundred years previously.

In the valley of the upper Hudson, the finest and best appointed British army marshalled against the colonies laid down its arms. On the shore of the lower Hudson, WAYNE, inscribed his name imperishably in the capture of Stony Point. All along this river, from New York to Kingston, the storm of battle raged and ravaged. On the plains of Flatbush, of Harlem, and of Westchester county, were bloody battles fought of momentous importance to Liberty. In the valley of the Mohawk occurred the combats of Oriskany and Fort Stanwix—the former the bloodiest of the American Revolution save one (King's Mountain) in proportion to the numbers engaged—and even the famous Bennington was not decided in Vermont, but in the town of Hoosic, in the county of Rensselaer, and State of New York, upon an affluent of the Hudson.

In 1803, the French Lieutenant Colonel M. JOLY DE ST. VALIER, published an "Argumentative History (*Histoire Raisonnee*) of the Military and Political operations of the Last War," which embraced our Revolutionary Struggles, and which, when written, amounted to a prophecy. Translate his words:

"In 1777 England augmented still more its force in America, until they numbered 55,000 men. This force is certainly double what was necessary to subjugate the whole of America in less than two years. All that was required was to dispose them so as to be able to act advantageously. This the English never knew how to do."

These views of the French Colonel closely corroborate those of the great German Tactical writer, von BULOW, translated and published in the New York *Historical Magazine* for 1865, pages 105, &c., 141, (see *Army and Navy Journal*, 111, 1865-66) 362, 3d, &c.

As soon as the season became favorable for the operations of the campaign, the English army under HOWE, which lay in New York, embarked, whilst another army 12,000 strong, with numbers of Savages, advancing from Canada, under the orders of General BURGOYNE, moved on Lake Champlain, and occupied the post of Ticonderoga. I then thought the English had perceived their mistake, and that their army was about to occupy the only post which was proper, and when I learned the arrival of BURGOYNE at Ticonderoga, I believed the Americans to be lost without remedy. I remained a long time in my error, because so long a delay was requisite to learn what had become of the army (HOWE'S) which had been shipped; but having at length understood that it had moved on Philadelphia, (southward instead of northward, to co-operate with the army from Canada) whilst BURGOYNE advanced from Ticonderoga to Albany, occupying the posts or forts which lay on his route, to assure his communications with Ticonderoga and Canada, I predicted the destruction of the English army; and shortly afterward news came that BURGOYNE's army had been obliged to lay down its arms and surrender at Saratoga to the Americans. Many people on this occasion blamed BURGOYNE, but with the greatest injustice, and without the slightest reason. As soon as he had orders to move from Ticonderoga upon Albany, and the Americans had been able to protect the country," (alluding to SCHUYLER's ruining the navigation of Wood Creek, breaking up the roads, felling the woods, driving off the live stock, removing supplies, &c.)—"and BURGOYNE was thus compelled to march through districts extremely difficult, in which he could find no subsistence, his destruction was certain, since it was easy for the Americans, when BURGOYNE was once caught in these wastes, to cut off his communications, and starve him out."—(This was exactly SCHUYLER's plan,

which succeeded.)—"To do this there was no need of fighting a battle; it was sufficient to dispute the ground inch by inch, and harass his marches."—(Exactly what SCHUYLER did.)—"Thenceforward courage and skill became useless, and *if the Americans had not demanded BURGOYNE's surrender, he would have been obliged to beg them to permit him to yield at discretion rather than to see his army perish from starvation and suffering.*"—(SCHUYLER accomplished all this; then came GATES and received the reward—New York as usual sacrificed to New England.)—"Here we have the history of the Roman Caudine Forks repeated * * * The English in moving upon New York intended to sever all communication between the colonies of the South and those of the North. They thought that in thus cutting the cake in two, the pieces would fall into their pockets, and the business would terminate at once. When they (HOWE) had taken New York, they perceived that, notwithstanding the success they had gained, it was impossible for them to interrupt these communications. Nevertheless, persisting in this plan, they brought 12,000 men from Canada, who after establishing themselves at Ticonderoga, had orders to move on Albany, where they should have met the advanced posts of HOWE's army. Thinking in this position they could sever any communication by land between the Northern and Southern colonies, at the same time being masters of the sea, and counting upon stopping the Americans from getting out of their ports, the English believed they could soon compel the whole of America to surrender at discretion. Let us now examine the possibility of succeeding in this operation. This undertaking comprehends nothing less than the establishment of a chain of posts from the mouth of the St. Lawrence to that of the Hudson; that is to say along a line of more than 600 miles, and through a country for the most part a wilderness. The execution of this monstrous project, even supposing it was susceptible of execution, would have required an army not of 50,000 men, but of 200,000.

"It is plain that after breaking the smallest link of such an extensive chain, which was very easy, the rest would fall of it.

self, and it would only be necessary to make the feblest efforts to destroy it entirely. Could they have forgotten TURENNE's celebrated winter campaign of 1675, against the Allies who had established themselves in Alsace? Did they not know that he destroyed almost in an instant an army three times as strong as his own, although the position of the Allies in Alsace, in 1675, was not near so bad as that of the English in America in 1777? In fine, it is easy to perceive that when the English had succeeded in giving to this immense chain a consistence of which it was not in reality susceptible, they might have remained for two centuries in this position without being able to win the smallest advantage for themselves, and without being able to do the slightest injury to the Americans. * * * * Had any people ever proposed to themselves the project of carrying on war at a distance of over 3,600 miles, from their capital," (base of supplies) "and subjecting themselves to the necessity of transporting thence the materials for the smallest meal for their whole army. * * * * The English army, however numerous, must have necessarily been employed in guarding the chain of posts which it had occupied, and it could not venture to weaken any one without exposing itself to fatal consequences. In this position it was consequently impossible to undertake the smallest enterprise against the American Provinces, and the Americans would finally remain peaceable possessors of their whole continent." Results demonstrated the justice of the French officer's opinion

Before BURGOYNE left Skeneborough, (now W. shall, occupied or captured July 6th) in the latter part of July —having lingered three weeks at this point—(Tome's Battles of America I. 500)—that is to say, as soon as the English General had to give up his water transport, he himself tacitly admitted that he comprehended that his campaign was a failure. (Compare Thatcher's Journal, 86.) Anyone who closely examines BURGOYNE'S own testimony must admit this. This was not due to any armed resistance, but to the impediments which SCHUYLER had succeeded in accumulating in his road, by which the natural difficulties of the country had been ren-

dered almost insurmountable. BURGOYNE's plans of advancing southward were chiefly based on the simultaneous co-operation of HOWE moving northward to meet him; but he likewise relied, in no small degree, on the equally simultaneous invasion of ST. LÉGER, marching down the valley of the Mohawk, eastward. The objective of all these three columns was Albany. Having barred the road to BURGOYNE by engineering obstacles, SCHUYLER arrested and disposed of ST. LÉGER by promptly detaching ARNOLD to the relief of Fort Stanwix (or Schuyler), at Rome, 12 miles west of Utica, and 107 miles West North West of Albany. All this had been accomplished; "BURGOYNE was already 'Burgoyned' before GATES superseded SCHUYLER."

The adversaries which SCHUYLER has massed in front of BURGOYNE were *passive* not *active*; *material* not *personal*; but even more potent than reliable Militia, or even half organized Continentals. There were few men in arms, but there were obstacles, material and moral, piled up by patriotism and sagacity; fearless, sleepless, indefatigable forgetfulness of self, and resolute laboriousness—every thought of a first-class military mind concentrated for the public good, regardless of private losses and public misjudgment of motives and actions, the heaven-reaching, and thence force deriving determination of an honest New-Netherlander.

In the treatment experienced by SCHUYLER, we have a perfect type of HOOKER's at the hands of HALLECK, and his supersedure by MEADE, in July, 1863. When GATES took the command BURGOYNE's tower was already tottering to its fall; a comparatively slight effort was only needed to push it over. This was what would have been termed in our Great Civil War "bush-whacking" on a big scale. The shock was given and it fell in ruins. It was tottering as the French Colonel predicted, not through the shock of arms, but through want of food. The latter sapped its strength and undermined its efficiency. Before GATES appeared (19th August) morally and physically the work was done. Of all soldiers the English most require a full stomach, and BURGOYNE's were

empty. On the 10th and 11th of August BURGOYNE had been compelled to send off BAUM and BREYMAN to gather in food. August 16th this expedition was utterly routed, *not* at Bennington, as usually stated, but at Walloomscoick, (Saneo-ick Mills) within the State of New York. BURGOYNE now had to depend upon supplies drawn from England, by way of Quebec and Lake Champlain. Three days after Bennington, thirteen days after Oriskany, and simultaneously with the relief of Fort Stanwix (this relief due alone to SCHUYLER's firmness) GATES superseded SCHUYLER, and assumed command nominally of the Northern Army—in the latter part of August; Thatethere would lead the reader to suppose about the 30th.

Arnold had been already detached to the relief of Fort Stanwix as soon as its danger had become known, about the 7th. After the toils of five weeks—toils due entirely to the engineering ability of SCHUYLER—BURGOYNE, on the 30th September, moved forward again. Then it was GATES, acting under the spur of ARNOLD, presented the barrier of arms.

On the 24th September the Americans had already cut BURGOYNE's lines of communication and supply, and Colonel BROWN had re-captured Ticonderoga. On the 17th October BURGOYNE capitulated on terms. Had GATES been a true native-born American (i. e. even in feeling, for he was English born, bred and educated) a prescient soldier or a firm man, or had SCHUYLER been continued in command, BURGOYNE must have surrendered at discretion, which would have saved an immense amount of recrimination, and consequent difficulty.

A few words more of remarks which ought to be exceedingly interesting to American soldiers. A flag, intended for the Stars and Stripes, first floated over captured standards on the ramparts of Fort Stanwix, August 5th, P. P. M., and the Stars and Stripes as we now see them, except as to the number of the Stars, was first unfurled to grace the Surrender of Saratoga, 17th October, 1777.

"This position," (referring to that of BURGOYNE's army depending for everything, even its supplies of daily food, on Quebec as a secondary base, but having its primary or real base in England,) "was thus excessively bad, and they (the English) had labored to render it even worse yet; for, not content with wishing to establish a chain of posts from the St. Lawrence, to that of the Hudson, General HOWE desired to extend this chain to the mouth of the Delaware, and had captured Philadelphia. We have seen that the destruction of BURGOYNE's Army was the inevitable consequence of an operation so well (sarcastic) combined." — "As soon as General HOWE started for Philadelphia, the troops of North America fell at their ease upon the Army of Great Britain."

Thus it is that minds truly military, predict the inevitable in war. Thus M. JOLY de ST VALIER foretold the ruin of BURGOYNE; von BULOW the fall of Prussia, in 1806; and SCHALK the course of the campaign in 1862, culminating at Antietam, putting his finger almost on the very spot where the decisive battle would be fought; and thus it is that solid men like SCHUYLER are sacrificed to such overrated men as GATES; or superseded the moment when the tree of their labors is about to flower and fruit in victory.

THOMAS, another SCHUYLER, came near experiencing a similar fate in 1864, when a few days respite enabled him to win the most resolute battle of the war,—Nashville.

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